

**Amendments to the Claims**

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of handling time-sensitive messages, comprising steps  
2 of:

3 marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;

4 sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a computing  
5 device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that when the marked message is  
6 received at [[a]] the computing device of the recipient, it will automatically be rendered to the  
7 recipient, and the recipient will be forced to respond thereto, within a time period of the time-  
8 sensitivity; and

9 automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing device of the  
10 recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response thereto  
11 regarding the marked message within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 2 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, that whether snoozing is allowed by the recipient for  
3 this message, such that the recipient will be allowed to temporarily delay the response to the  
4 rendered message within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 3 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

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1 Claim 4 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 3, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, a starting time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 5 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving the marked message at the computing device of the recipient;  
3 determining whether the time period of the time-sensitivity of the received message has  
4 been reached; and  
5 requiring the received message to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the recipient to  
6 respond thereto, within the time period of the time-sensitivity if so.

Claim 6 (canceled)

1 Claim 7 (currently amended): A method of improving electronic communications, comprising  
2 steps of:  
3 receiving a plurality of electronic messages [[by]] at a computing device of a recipient to  
4 whom the electronic messages are addressed; and  
5 evaluating the received electronic messages for processing by the computing device,  
6 further comprising steps of:  
7 determining whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is time-  
8 sensitive; and  
9 requiring the selected one to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the recipient

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10 to respond thereto, within a time period of the time-sensitivity if [[so]] the determining step has a  
11 positive result and the time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded.

Claim 8 (canceled)

1 Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the steps of:  
2 determining, when the selected one is time-sensitive and [[a]] the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the selected one;  
4 and  
5 if so, allowing the recipient to delay the response to the selected one delaying the  
6 requiring step until a later time, wherein the later time [[is]] remains within the time period of the  
7 time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 10 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the evaluating step further  
2 comprises the step of:  
3 determining, when the selected one is time-sensitive and the time period of the time-  
4 sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the selected one;  
5 and  
6 if so, allowing the recipient to suppress the requiring step only while (1) a starting time of  
7 the time period has been reached but (2) an ending time of the time period has not been reached.

1 Claim 11 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the

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2 [[steps]] step of:

3 ~~requiring the recipient to create a response to the rendered selected one; and~~

4 sending a notification of the response to a computing device of a creator ~~sender~~ of the

5 rendered selected one.

1 Claim 12 (original): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step of

2 determining whether processing of the rendered selected one is complete, and if not,

3 remembering the rendered selected one for subsequent evaluation at a later time, wherein the

4 later time is within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 13 (canceled)

1 Claim 14 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are e-

2 mail messages.

1 Claim 15 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are

2 electronic calendar events.

1 Claim 16 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are to-

2 do items.

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the steps

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2 of:

3 determining, when the selected one is time-sensitive and ~~[[a]]~~ the time period of the time-  
4 sensitivity is approaching or has been reached but not exceeded, whether a hierarchy of event  
5 notification techniques has been defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so,  
6 selecting a recipient notification technique which corresponds to an amount of time in the time  
7 period in addition to or instead of the step of requiring the selected one to be rendered to the  
8 recipient.

1 Claim 18 (currently amended): A system for handling time-sensitive messages, comprising:

2 means for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;

3 means for sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a  
4 computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that when the marked  
5 message is received at ~~[[a]]~~ the computing device of the recipient, it will automatically be  
6 rendered to the recipient, and the recipient will be forced to response thereto, within a time  
7 period of the time-sensitivity; and

8 means for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing  
9 device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response  
10 thereto regarding the marked message within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 19 (currently amended): The system according to Claim 18, wherein the marking means  
2 further comprises means for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the  
3 time-sensitivity of the message.

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1 Claim 20 (currently amended): A system for improving electronic communications, comprising:  
2 means for receiving a plurality of electronic messages [[by]] at a computing device of a  
3 recipient to whom the electronic messages are addressed;  
4 means for determining whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is time-  
5 sensitive, and if so, whether a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not  
6 exceeded; and  
7 means for requiring the selected one to be rendered to the recipient, and forcing the  
8 recipient to respond thereto, within the time period of the time-sensitivity if so.

Claim 21 (canceled)

1 Claim 22 (currently amended): A computer program product for handling time-sensitive  
2 messages, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media  
3 and comprising:  
4 computer-readable program code means for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as  
5 time-sensitive;  
6 computer-readable program code means for sending the marked message from a  
7 computing device of the creator to a computing device of a recipient for whom the message was  
8 created, such that when the marked message is received at [[a]] the computing device of the  
9 recipient, it will automatically be rendered to the recipient, and the recipient will be forced to  
10 respond thereto, within a time period of the time-sensitivity; and

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11 computer-readable program code means for automatically receiving a reply from the  
12 recipient, sent from the computing device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator  
13 following the recipient's response thereto regarding the marked message within the time period  
14 of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 23 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 22, wherein  
2 the computer-readable program code means for marking further comprises computer-readable  
3 program code means for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-  
4 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving electronic  
2 communications, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable  
3 media and comprising:

4 computer-readable program code means for receiving a plurality of electronic messages  
5 [[by]] at a computing device of a recipient to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

6 computer-readable program code means for determining whether a selected one of the  
7 received electronic messages is time-sensitive, and if so, whether a time period of the time-  
8 sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded; and

9 computer-readable program code means for requiring the selected one to be rendered to  
10 the recipient, and forcing the recipient to respond thereto, within the time period of the time-  
11 sensitivity if so.

Claim 25 (canceled)

- 1 Claim 26 (new): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the requiring step further comprises  
2 the steps of:
- 3 automatically starting execution of an application for rendering the selected one, at the  
4 computing device of the recipient, if the execution of the application is not currently started;  
5 automatically bringing a window rendered by the application to a foreground of a display  
6 of the computing device and making the window active;  
7 automatically rendering the selected one in the active window; and  
8 requiring the recipient to take action with the selected one before performing any other  
9 tasks with the application.